

REMARKS

This is in response to the Final Office Action mailed on October 3, 2006. In the Office Action, claims 1-19 and 21 were pending with claims 5, 12-14, and 18 having been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1-4, 6-11, 15, 16 and 19 were rejected. Further, claims 17 and 21 were objected to. With this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 15 and 19 are amended. For the following reasons, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

On page 2 of the Office Action, claims 2-6 and 9-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, it was stated that claim 2 recites "the first recessed surface" which lacks proper antecedent basis. Herewith, claim 2 has been amended to recite "the second center split surface" instead of "the first recessed surface". Additionally, Applicant has made similar amendments to claims 7 and 8. Applicant submits that claims 2-6 and 9-11 are no longer indefinite and requests that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, be withdrawn.

Further on page 2, claims 1-3, 6-8, 15-16, and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Rao et al. (hereinafter "Rao", US Pub. No. 2002/0075599). Of these claims, claims 1, 15, and 19 are in independent form.

Independent claim 1, as amended, recites "a center split feature separate from and forward of the transducer and disposed proximate a centroid of the slider." The center split feature includes first, second, and third center split surfaces. Applicant submits that Rao does not teach or suggest the above features. In the Office Action, Rao was cited as disclosing a first center split surface (pad 66), a second center split surface (inlet 78), and a third center split surface (e.g., proximate area 94). Pad 66 carries the transducer of slider 20. As such, the feature cited in Rao as disclosing the center split feature recited in claim 1 is not "separate from and forward of the transducer" as required in claim 1. For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 is neither taught nor suggested by the cited reference and is in allowable form. Further, Applicant submits that related dependent claims 2-4 and 6-11 are also in allowable form at least based on their relation to claim 1.

Additionally, Applicant believes that many of these dependent claims independently recite limitations that are neither taught nor suggested by the cited references. For example, as stated in the Office Action, claims 4 and 9-11 include features that are not shown in the references. Further, dependent claim 6 recites "wherein a portion of the subambient pressurization cavity includes the third center split surface." Rao does not disclose a cavity including a center split surface that is separate from and forward of the transducer. It is noted that these are simply examples of some dependent claims that are believed to be independently patentable.

Independent claim 15, as amended, recites "a first center split surface having a portion proximate the centroid." Applicant notes that the Office Action cites pad 66 of Rao as disclosing this feature. However, pad 66 is positioned at a trailing edge of slider 20 and is not positioned proximate the centroid. For at least this reason, Applicant submits that claim 15 is in allowable form. Further, Applicant submits that claims 16-18 are also in allowable form at least based on their relation to claim 15.

Independent claim 19, as amended, recites "a first center split surface substantially level with the bearing surface, wherein the first center split surface has at least a portion positioned between the centroid and the leading edge." Applicant notes that pad 66 cited in Rao is positioned at a trailing edge of slider 20. Therefore, pad 66 is not between the centroid and the leading edge as required by claim 19. For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 19 is in allowable form. Further, Applicant submits that claim 21 is also in allowable form at least based on its relation to claim 19.

On page 4 of the Office Action, claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Jang et al. (hereinafter "Jang", US Pub. No. 2002/0008940). Claim 19 as amended, recites "a cavity dam disposed forward of the center split feature relative to a fluid flow, the cavity dam having a first portion proximate a first side edge of the slider and a second portion proximate a second side edge of the slider." Further, claim 19 provides that "the cavity dam extends continuously between the first and second portions." The Office Action cited the step feature forward of 120 in Jang as disclosing the recited cavity dam. However, Applicant

submits that the feature forward of rail 120, as well as rail 120, are not disclosed as being continuous from one side edge of the slider to another side edge of the slider.

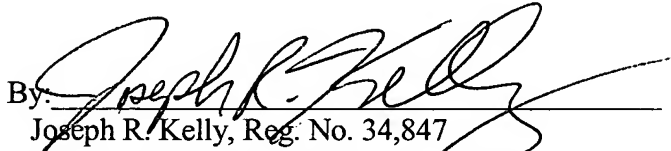
Further, features 130, 131, and 180 of Jang were cited as disclosing the center split features recited in claim 19. However, Applicant notes that Jang does not teach or suggest a top step feature (i.e., rail 130) that is substantially level with the bearing surface as required in claim 19. In fact, from Figs. 4-6, it appears as though rails 130, 230, and 330 are level with stepped portions 141, 242, and 341 which are not level with the bearing surface. For at least this reason, Applicant submits that claim 19 is neither taught nor suggested by the cited reference, and is in allowable form.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims, namely claims 1-4, 6-11, 15-19, and 21, are in allowable form. Reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

The Director is authorized to charge any fee deficiency required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-1123.

Respectfully submitted,

WESTMAN, CHAMPLIN & KELLY, P.A.

By: 
Joseph R. Kelly, Reg. No. 34,847
900 Second Avenue South, Suite 1400
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-3319
Phone: (612) 334-3222 Fax: (612) 334-3312